



## **VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE**

1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 134

Richmond, Virginia 23288

Phone: 804-285-8227

Fax: 804-285-3363

E-mail: [dana@vachiefs.org](mailto:dana@vachiefs.org)

[www.vachiefs.org](http://www.vachiefs.org)

Contact: Ms. Dana Schrad, Executive Director

Mobile: (804) 338-9512

For Release September 28, 2011



### **NINE VIRGINIA LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS RECEIVE VACP/VPCF AWARDS FOR VALOR**

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police on September 27, 2011 presented nine Virginia law enforcement officers from four agencies with the Association's highest honor, the Award for Valor. The awards were presented at the Valor Awards Banquet at the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, held this year at the Waterside Marriott in Norfolk, Virginia. The awards program is a joint effort of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and the Virginia Police Chiefs Foundation.

The Award for Valor recognizes a law enforcement officer who, in the line of duty, performs an act of extraordinary heroism while engaged with an adversary at imminent personal risk. Officers receiving the 2011 Awards for Valor are:

#### **Chesterfield County Police Department**

**Sergeant Jason A. Seamster**

**Officer First Class David E. Ickes, Jr.**

**Officer Collin Griffiths**

**Auxiliary Officer George M. Laffoon**

**Auxiliary Officer Kenneth T. Roeber**

On January 15, 2011 at 4:45 pm, Officer Griffiths, Ickes and Laffoon and Sgt. Seamster responded to a residence in Chesterfield County on an attempted suicide call. The man was located inside the residence,

unresponsive on the dining room floor, with two 30-gallon propane tanks spewing propane gas into the residence. The man's wife could not be located and it could not be determined if she was in the residence.

Sgt. Seamster decided to enter the residence and formed a rescue plan with his officers. As Officer Ickes opened the front door to ventilate the residence, the man was observed getting off of the floor and into a chair. As Officer Laffoon, Officer Griffiths, and Sgt. Seamster entered the residence to retrieve the man, he grabbed a fully-loaded pistol that was sitting on the table in front of him. Sgt. Seamster removed the gun from the man's hand while Officers Laffoon and Griffiths restrained David and removed him to the front yard. Officers Ickes and Roeber also entered the residence and assisted in removing the man, who had lost consciousness again.

As firefighters entered the residence to neutralize the propane tanks, the propane gas ignited and started a gas fire inside the residence.

#### **Danville Police Department**

##### **Officer Berry H. Sossoman, Jr.**

At approximately 6:00 pm on September 7, 2010, Officer Berry H. Sossoman of the Danville Police Department had just finished refueling his patrol vehicle and had driven less than a city block when a woman flagged him down. The woman advised him that two men were fighting in a nearby home.

Officer Sossoman reported this information to dispatch and he and another officer approached the front door. A young man came out of the house onto the front porch and said that he had been involved in an altercation with an older man inside the house. The older man dated the younger man's mother and had wrecked her vehicle earlier that day.

The older man then came onto the porch and Officer Sossoman attempted to mediate a solution between the two men. While Officer Sossoman tried to calm the older man, the younger man produced a utility knife, reached over Officer Sossoman's shoulder, and severely cut the older man's face. Officer Sossoman turned and knocked the knife from the younger man's hand and pushed him off the porch and into the arms of the second officer. When Officer Sossoman turned back to the older man to provide emergency care for his wound, he discovered the man had produced a handgun and had begun shooting.

One bullet struck the younger man in the arm and another bullet struck Officer Sossoman in the left hand. Fearing for his own life, the life of his partner and the life of the younger man, Officer Sossoman sought cover, drew his service weapon and fired two quick shots into the chest of the older man, killing him instantly. Officer Sossoman was able to stumble from the porch and take cover until backup officers arrived. Both Officer Sossoman and the younger man recovered from their gunshot wounds.

#### **Martinsville Police Department**

##### **Officer Doug Graham**

##### **Officer Ryan Martin**

##### **Officer Anita Sowers**

On April 29, 2010 at approximately 12:00 pm, officers from the Martinsville Police Department received a report of a robbery at the Kroger's Grocery Store by a subject who brandished a large hunting knife at a clerk. Officers Anita Sowers, Ryan Martin, and Shane Clifton responded to the call, along with Officer Doug Graham, who was leaving court when he heard the call given out.

When Officer Martin pulled in behind the suspect's vehicle, the suspect dropped the groceries in his hand, quickly reached into a shoulder bag, grabbed a large hunting knife and then charged towards the driver's side of Officer Martin's patrol car. Officer Martin was able to open his car door a few inches when the suspect hit it with such force that it was slammed shut. He immediately drew his weapon and leaned away from the window and began ordering the suspect to drop the knife and move away from his car.

The officers made repeated attempts to restrain the suspect, who sped out of the parking lot, striking two other parked vehicles. The officers engaged in a nearly three mile pursuit of the vehicle before the suspect lost control of his vehicle and crashed into a chain link fence surrounding a local bowling alley. All four officers pursued the suspect on foot until he finally reached a point where he was blocked in. Officers tried to restrain the suspect, who then charged at Officer Sowers with the hunting knife raised over his head. Officer Doug Graham responded with gunfire in an attempt to save Officer Sowers from the attack. Despite receiving what was a fatal gunshot wound, officers still had to forcefully remove the knife from the suspect's hand, at which time they immediately began administering first aid and CPR. It was later determined through an investigation that the suspect had mental health problems and had been off of his medication for at least two years.

-#-

*The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is a statewide organization of federal, state and local police chiefs and law enforcement executives dedicated to improving the professionalism of police agencies in Virginia. The Association was founded in 1926 and has more than 600 members. The Virginia Police Chiefs Foundation is a charitable educational foundation created by the VACP to provide training and education programs for law enforcement executives.*

PICTURED: Front (L. to R.) – Roeber, Laffoon, Griffiths, Ickes and Seamster;  
Back (L. to R.) – Sowers, Graham, Martin and Sossoman.

HIGH-RES PHOTOS: High-resolution images are available online at  
<http://photos.vachiefs.org/VACP-Conferences/2011-VACP-Annual-Conference/2011-09-27-VACP-Awards-Banquet/>